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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSA-00 PA-03

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R 030630 Z APR 73
FM AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI
TO SECO STATE WASHDC 1394
INFO AMEMBASSY NICOSIA
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E. O.11652: N/A
TAGS: SOCI, GR, CY

SUBJECT: REACTION TO IERONYMOS RESIGNATION

1. ALL THESSALONIKI WEEKEND PAPERS GAVE MAJOR COVERAGE TO MARCH 30 RESIGNATION, BUT DIFFERED REGARDING LIKELY SUCCESSORS. ALL, HOWEVER, LISTED VARIOUS METROPOLITANS OF NORTHERN GREECE AS MOST LIKELY CANDIDATES. OPPOSITION "MAKEDONIA" AND "THESSALONIKI" CITED METROPOLITAN VARNAVAS OF KITROS (KATERINI) AS FRONTRUNNER ON BASIS OF DOCTORATE DEGREE, FRIENDSHIP WITH PRIME MINISTER, SUPPORT FROM OTHER METROPOLITANS, AND PUBLISHED WORKS. THESSALONIKI METROPOLITAN LEONIDAS, ON OTHER HAND, CARRIED AS FIFTH CHOICE AFTER VARNAVAS AND METROPOLITANS OF HYDRA, EDESSA, AND PARAMITHIA.

2. CONSERVATIVE "ELLINIKOS VORRAS" CLEARLY FAVORS LEONIDAS, HOWEVER, AND FRONTPAGED HIS CREDENTIALS AND PHOTOGRAPHS. IN INTERVIEW WITH "VORRAS" ON MARCH 31, LEONIDAS CITES HIS "INVOLVEMENT WITH PROBLEMS OF THESSALONIKI", BUT REFRAINS FROM COMMENT ON RESIGNATION AND DOES NOT EXCLUDE HIS OWN CANDIDACY. IN ADDITION TO REASONS CITED IN THE ATHENS PRESS FOR IERONYMOS RESIGNATION, PAPER ALSO LISTS RECENT DISAGREEMENT OF ARCHBISHOP WITH LEONIDAS ON ISSUE OF SUPPORT FOR MAKARIS. ACCORDING TO FRONTPAGE COLUMN OF MARCH 31, LEONIDAS HAS "STRONGLY OPPOSED" HOLY SYNOD BACKING OF MAKARIS AGAINST THREE CYPRIOT METROPOLITANS.

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3. IN ONLY EDITORIAL COMMENT HERE, CHIEF EDITOR ELIAS KYROU OF "VORRAS" LINKS RESIGNATION TO DETERIORATION OF RELATIONS WITH ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE AND CITES THIS AS FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE FOR NEW ARCHBISHOP. SUMMARY COMMENT IN "VORRAS" WEEKLY OPINION COLUMN LISTS FIVE OPTIONS IN PRESENT SITUATION: 1) WITHDRAWAL OF IERONYMOS RESIGNATION, 2) ELECTION OF INTERIM METROPOLITAN FOR 1-2 YEAR TERM WHICH WOULD FAVOR LEONIDAS, 3) ELECTION OF YOUNGER METROPOLITAN SUCH AS NICODEMOS OF ATTICA FOR PURPOSE OF "RADICAL, LONG-TERM REFORMS", 4) ELECTION OF VARNAVAS OF KITROS BECAUSE OF "CERTAIN" SUPPORT FROM OTHER METROPOLITANS, AND 5) "DARING" ELECTION OF MAKARIOS AS ARCHBISHOP OF GREECE WHICH WOULD ALTER "GREEK HISTORY FOR NEXT 10 YEARS".

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a
*** Current Classification *** UNCLASSIFIED
Subject: REACTION TO IERONYMOS RESIGNATION

From: THESSALONIKI

To: ATHENS

Type: TE

Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005